

6-11-82

Trip Report Senator John Danforth Visit to Syntex Agribusiness, Inc. Plant
Verona, Missouri

Kenneth S. Ritchey, Regional Dioxin Coordinator, WMBR

Site: Syntex Verona
ID #: MOB007453154
Break: 14.1
Other: 0751
6-11-82

Robert L. Morby, Chief, WMBR

On June 5, 1982, I traveled to Verona, Missouri to represent the Agency in response to Senator John Danforth office's request that EPA be represented at the Senator's visit to the Syntex facility. I arrived at the Syntex's Verona facility at 1:30 p.m. I was greeted by Earl Barkley, Vice President and General Manager, Ray Forester, Plant Engineer, and Lynn Christensen, Head, Public Affairs, for Syntex. At 2 p.m., Senator Danforth arrived via helicopter at the facility and was greeted by Syntex officials and John Moore, Mayor of Verona and members of the Board of Aldermen. The Senator was escorted to the briefing area behind Syntex offices. Mr. Barkley introduced me to Senator as the EPA representative. Mr. Barkley using maps provided a short briefing to all assembled on the Denny Farm Site, Tank T-1, the detoxification process and Syntex trenches. As the briefing was concluding about 2:10 p.m., Robert Schrieber, Pat Phillips and James Whitely representing MDNR, MDH, and CCC respectively arrived and shortly thereafter members of the press arrived (KY-3, Channel 10, Springfield and Aurora newspapers). As the briefing concluded, the attached press release was provided by Syntex, and directions for the tour of the trench area were provided by Mr. Barkley. The Senator traveled to the trenches in a jeep, followed in a bus, by members of the Verona Council, press and state and Federal officials.

Ray Forester briefed the Senator and media on Syntex's work to date on the trenches and the fact that the trenches were not leaching to the Spring River as far as Syntex was concerned. Senator Danforth complimented Syntex for the company's responsible actions to protect environment and public health of persons living in the area. The KY-3 representative intensively questioned the Senator on his involvement with Superfund and to why the fund was not being used for sites in the Spring River area. The question of liability for the trench site came up during the course of the questioning and the Senator request the EPA representative to respond on this subject. I responded that based on the Agency's investigative work to date that it appeared that Syntex and NEPACCO may be potentially liable. The Senator continued to respond to questions concerning uncontrolled sites; however, indicated the "chiggers" were getting bad and it was time to move back to the office area. All involved were transported back to the Syntex parking lot where the Senator's aid provided him with a fishing pole and fishing vest to go fishing at the location in the Spring River where the highest TCDD contaminated fish have been found. Dr. James Whitely, of the Missouri Conservation Commission assisted the Senator in threading the fishing pole. A member of the Verona City Council inquired if the Senator had a valid Missouri trout fishing license. The Senator had a 1981 expired license, but not a 1982 current license.

Attachment



40030219
SUPERFUND RECORDS

ARWM:WMBR:KSRitchey:fg:x 6531:Disk#6

CONCURRENCES

SYMBOL	WMBR						
SJRNAME							
LATE							

The fishing effort concluded and the Senator discussed with Missouri officials and myself how Syntex was doing on addressing the known sites. Robert Schrieber responded that the company was doing very well and related his concerns on how the Superfund rating system was being applied to sites in the Spring River Basin. Bob believes the sites should be grouped rather than rated individually as currently is the case. I pointed out the sites on Syntex property that the company still needs to address and indicated the company was keeping EPA informed of their work. I also pointed out the current EPA/State/Syntex effort concerning use of the EPA mobile incinerator. The Senator voiced his support for such an undertaking. Following this discussion, the Senator expressed his appreciation to Syntex and others attending for the briefing and departed at 2:45 p.m.

I appreciate the opportunity to represent the Agency and would be pleased to answer any questions that may arise.

cc: R. Ritter, CIGL
R. Michaels, PRAP

SOME COMPLIMENTS FOR SYNTAX'S ROLE
IN CLEANING UP NEPACCO'S WASTES

Syntax's actions "represent the highest degree of corporate care and concern."

Sen. Thomas Eagleton (Mo.)

Compliments Syntax for its "responsible and constructive actions."

Douglas Costle,
former Administrator, U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency

Syntax's efforts are "a model for the nation."

Dr. Kay Camin,
former Administrator, U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency, Region VII

Resource Steward Award, 1981

Missouri Department of Natural
Resources

"Syntax has given a fine example of what can be accomplished by a concerned industrial community."

Fred Lafser,
Director, Missouri Department of
Natural Resources

Praises Syntax for "displaying admirable corporate accountability."

Editorial, Springfield, Mo. Daily News

Thanks for Syntax for its "caring attitude...and moral and unselfish stance.... Therefore, be it resolved that the Aurora Chamber of Commerce thanks and publicly applauds Syntax Agribusiness, Inc.... We are happy your firm is part of our community."

Aurora, Mo., Chamber of Commerce

BRIEF HISTORY OF EFFORTS TO RID
THE VERONA AREA OF NEPACCO'S WASTES

- 1969 • Dioxin was created in Southwest Missouri over ten years ago by the North Eastern Pharmaceutical and Chemical Company, Inc. ("Nepaccc") which leased part of a plant from another company which Syntex subsequently bought.

- 1974 • Three years after Nepaccco ceased operations in 1971, Syntex discovered a tank with dioxin-containing material and on its own initiative began seeking a method to dispose of the wastes. As the area's largest employer, Syntex undertook this effort to remove a source of concern to its employees and the local community. Later, when the EPA started to show interest, Syntex held briefings and maintained open communications.

- 1974-
1980 • Six years and countless dollars resulted in the development of a new process to degrade the dioxin in these wastes. With the blessings of the EPA and the State of Missouri, the project began and operated successfully.

- 1980-
1981 • Syntex voluntarily helps the EIA to successfully excavate and secure Nepaccco wastes buried at a farm site near Verona, Missouri. Project called by EPA "a model for the nation."

- 1981 • Syntex, in cooperation with EIA, securely stores Nepaccco wastes that may present a danger to the environment.

- 1980-
1982 • EPA and Syntex work together to find a means of ultimately disposing of any remaining Nepaccco wastes.

- 1982 • EPA, MDNR, and Syntex work together to assess the Spring River situation. EPA and MDNR sample and analyze fish and investigate other areas. Syntex investigates various locations including trenches on the hillside behind its Verona, Mo. plant.

THE SPRING RIVER SITUATION

- ... River sampled near Verona, Missouri and some of the fish (not all) were found to contain dioxin.
- ... Highest amount of dioxin found in edible portion of any fish: 18 parts per trillion (18 ppt = 18 seconds in 32,000 years) (Only one such fish found, others levels found were lower.)
- ... No dioxin found in water (dioxin not soluble in water).
- ... U.S. Food and Drug Administration and EPA Scientific Advisory Panel: Levels do not warrant any restriction of fish consumption (less than an average of 25 ppt dioxin, no restriction). (Assuming an average amount of 18 ppt, a person would have to eat more than 600 pounds of fish filets every week, or more than 85 pounds per day to reach a level considered to have an effect on laboratory animals.)
- ... Missouri Division of Health: No health problems found that may be linked to consumption of fish in the Spring River and nothing indicates that the Spring River is unsafe for swimming or wading.
- ... Missouri Department of Natural Resources: does not know where dioxin is coming from or when contamination occurred.
- ... EPA and MDNR are checking various possibilities and continuing to monitor the river.
- ... Syntex is also investigating various possibilities, including the trenches on the hillside behind the Verona plant. (Testing of the trenches began in early May.)